Legislation for the Welfare of Agricultural Workers

245. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal under their consideration to enact a legislation for the welfare of agricultural workers numbering 100 million; if so, the details thereof;

(b) by when it is likely to be passed; and

(c) the reasons for the delay in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government proposes to introduce a Bill for regulation of employment and working condition of agricultural workers and to provide for certain welfare measures to them. The legislation would benefit 135 million workers in agriculture and allied activities.

(b) and (c) The introduction of the Bill in the Parliament is awaiting completion of procedural requirements including Cabinet approval. The delay so far has been due to the complexity and enormity of the task as also on account of the views of the State Governments arising out of widely varying agro-climatic conditions, agricultural practices and employer-employee relationship prevailing in different States.

Tackling the child labour

246. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether any significant steps have been taken to tackle child labour in various sectors in 1996-97;

(b) if so, the impact of such measures; and

(c) the fresh initiatives proposed in 1997-98 to tackle this social menace?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) A major programme was announced in August 1994 for the rehabilitation of around 2 million children working in hazardous occupations through a project approach. So far 76 National Child Labour Projects have been set up under the programme for the rehabilitation of 1.5 lakh children. These projects continued to be funded during 1996-97. As per the available information, around 1.05 lakh children are already enrolled in the special schools set up under the projects.

(c) While the Government was still considering extension of the programme to other districts, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in their judgement 10.12.96 issued several directions regarding the manner in which the children working in hazardous occupations are to be withdrawn and rehabilitated as also the manner in which the working conditions of children working in non hazardous occupations are to be improved and regulated. The directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, *inter alia*, include conduct of survey to identify the working children, payment of compensation @Rs. 20,000 per child by the offending employers for employment of children in the hazardous occupations and provision of education to children working in non-hazardous occupations at employers' cost. The implementation of the directions of the Court is expected to help in tackling the problem of child labour.

Improvement of Working Conditions of Beedi Labour

247. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMI: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any legislation to improve working conditions of beedi workers;